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# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:  
Tuesday, August 29, 2000

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## West Nile Virus detected in Monroe County bird

A dead crow found on Mosley Road in the Town of Greece has tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). Monroe County health officials have been preparing for the arrival of WNV and emphasize that with proper precautions, people can still safely enjoy the outdoors. Over 1/2 of New York's 62 counties are now reporting WNV activity, and state health officials believe the virus has likely spread throughout the state.

The Monroe County Health Department will immediately undertake a number of actions as a result of finding a dead bird infected with WNV, including:

- Initiate mosquito larvicide program in catch-basins and other standing water within an approximate two-mile radius of the where the bird was found.
- Work with Greece and City of Rochester officials to survey the area within the 2-mile radius to eliminate standing water and to disseminate information on WNV
- Increase mosquito collection and testing in affected area
- Increase bird testing from area where bird was found
- Mail a comprehensive brochure developed by the Monroe County Departments of Health and Communications and Special Events on West Nile Virus and how to protect yourself to every household in Monroe County.

Health officials urge the public, particularly people over the age of 50, to exercise caution, but stress that less than 1% of people infected with WNV will have symptoms serious enough to require hospitalization. The vast majority of people fully recover from the illness. WNV is rarely fatal except for people who are otherwise at very high-risk due to other health problems.

A 24-hour information line has been established and will be updated regularly. The number is: **234-9600**. Extensive information on WNV is available at the Monroe County Web site: [www.co.monroe.ny.us/health](http://www.co.monroe.ny.us/health).

The New York State Health Department has declared Monroe County to be under a Public Health Threat with the confirmation of the virus. The Monroe County Health Department has applied for required permits from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to apply larvicide to bodies of water

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not easily drained. The Health Department published a notice in the Democrat and Chronicle more than a week ago, stating its intention to apply larvicides in conformance with the permits. Those permits require an additional 48-hour notice of intent to apply the larvicide in specific areas. That notice, for the area bounded by Latta Road on the north, Ridge Road on the south, Long Pond Road on the west and Lake Avenue on the east (an approximate 2-mile radius surrounding the site where the bird was found), is given today by the publication of this and other news releases.

West Nile Virus is a viral infection that is transmitted by mosquitoes. Most people will experience no symptoms, or will have mild flu-like symptoms such as a slight fever, headache or body aches. In the most serious cases, infection can result in encephalitis, which is an inflammation of the brain. It usually takes between 5-15 days for symptoms to develop. There is no specific treatment or vaccine for WNV.

### **Personal protection recommendations**

Health officials believe that the virus will continue to be present for some time, perhaps indefinitely. Consequently, there are a number of protective steps that people can take to greatly reduce their risk of contracting the virus.

- Avoid or reduce time spent outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, typically between dusk and dawn
- Use insect repellents containing the material DEET; follow instructions, apply outdoors, and wash the material off your skin once inside for the evening
- Wear long sleeves and pants to cover exposed skin, when practical
- Assure that all screens in your home are in good repair
- Call a doctor if you have symptoms thought to be related to WNV

### **Reduce mosquito habitat at home**

Draining areas of standing water in residential neighborhoods where mosquitoes lay eggs is perhaps the most important step that the public can do to reduce the mosquito population. Mosquitoes don't travel very far, so actions by individual homeowners to eliminate standing water can reduce the number of mosquitoes in the immediate vicinity of a person's home. Recent cool nights, with temperatures less than 60 degrees, cause mosquitoes to become inactive which should reduce contact with mosquitoes.

- Empty plastic containers, children's pools, wheelbarrows and all other items that collect and hold water
- Dispose of old tires
- Cover garbage cans and close dumpsters
- Check gutters to make sure they are not clogged and collecting water
- Change water in bird baths every 2-3 days
- Fill in low areas and depressions on your property that retain water for days
- Consider use of store bought larvicide, called Mosquito Dunks, in small water holding containers that cannot be drained.

Health officials request that the public continue to report dead birds to enable the tracking of the illness in Monroe County. Staff may ask that the bird be retained for testing or instruct people to dispose of the bird if testing is deemed unnecessary. Crows and bluejays are the primary bird species being tested at this time.

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*For More Information:*  
*Communications and Special Events, 428.2380,*  
Or see us on the web at *[www.co.monroe.ny.us](http://www.co.monroe.ny.us)*